Peel’s *Growing Success* Monograph Series: Crafting Curriculum Learning Goals

Grades 1-12

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Students’ interest in learning and their belief that they can learn are critical to their success. After reviewing the impact of testing on students’ motivation to learn, Harlen and Deakin Crick (p. 203) recommended the use of assessment *for* learning and *as* learning – including strategies such as **sharing learning goals** and success criteria, providing feedback in relation to goals, and developing students’ ability to self-assess

as a way of increasing students’ engagement in and commitment to learning.

The use of assessment for the purpose of improving learning and helping students become independent learners requires a culture in which student and teacher learn together in a collaborative relationship, each playing an active role in setting **learning goals**, developing success criteria, giving and receiving feedback, monitoring progress, and adjusting learning strategies.

The teacher acts as a “lead learner”, providing support while gradually releasing more and more responsibility to the student, as the student develops the knowledge and skills needed to become an independent learner.

# Context

**An Assessment Framework**

The research on effective assessment locates assessment *for* learning and *as* learning within a framework of three key processes and five strategies that teachers and students use collaboratively to support student learning.

The three processes, as identified by Ramaprasad in Black and Wiliam (p. 7), are:

* establishing where learners are in their learning
* establishing where the learners are going in their learning;
* establishing what needs to be done to get learners to where they are going.

The five strategies, adapted from Black and Wiliam (p. 8), are:

• identifying and clarifying learning goals and success criteria;

• engineering effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit information about student learning;

• providing feedback that helps learners move forward;

• engaging students as learning resources for one another;

• helping students understand what it means to “own” their own learning, and empowering them to do so.

**Learning Goals**

Brief statements that describe for a student what he or she should know and

be able to do by the end of a period of instruction (e.g., a lesson, series of lessons, or subtask). The goals represent subsets or clusters of knowledge and skills that the student must master to

successfully achieve the overall curriculum expectations.

CISESS, Peel District School Board

**“Students can hit any target they can see that holds still for them”-Rick Stiggins**

# Policy

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**Why Use Learning Goals?**

* Learning goals are visible, transparent and public targets that “stand still” for all students
* Students can use learning goals for peer and self-assessment
* Students truly understand, in language that they can access, what they are to learn and achieve over time
* Teachers can ensure that their program aligns to the Ontario curriculum by reflecting on and refining the goals and ensuring they address the Overall and Specific curriculum expectations
* To be effective, fair and equitable, co-constructed or clarified success criteria (performance standards) always reference clearly articulated established learning goals that correspond to the curriculum
* Learning goals break down the curriculum (content standards) into the language of learning which is more manageable for both students and teachers
* Use of “I can” and “we are learning to…” statements promote a learning culture and a growth mindset in learners
* Learning goals promote equity and inclusion because learning is made visible, is public and is shared by all
* Teachers can identify strengths and areas requiring further development in their programs
* Place more ownership and responsibility for ongoing learning with students within a framework of gradual release of responsibility

**Clarifying Learning Goals and Success Criteria**

When classroom learning goals become more complex it is appropriate to take some time to check with students to see if they share a common understanding of what they are to know, do, think about. Often teachers believe their learning goals have been expressed in clear language but upon checking with students, they discover that students misunderstand a word or concept implied in the learning goal. Clarifying or co-constructing success criteria involve students in truly understanding what they will need to do and at what level of quality to be successful. It involves students and teachers in an open conversation about what “counts” and what quality performance looks like, sounds like, presents like etc. Clarifying learning goals and success criteria puts the focus squarely on learning.

**When Are Learning Goals and Success Criteria Shared with Students?**

In the vast majority of cases teachers should share the learning goals at (or near) the beginning of a learning sequence. However, teachers need to use their professional judgement to identify optimal timing. For example, some teachers want students to experience a learning event or inquire into a process as a form of discovery. Teachers need to do what makes the most sense for their students/subject. Research reminds us that students can hit any learning target (goal) that ‘stands still’. Teachers can also use learning goals to debrief and consolidate the learning with a class.

**What Might Be a Way to Approach Learning Goals in Primary and Junior Grades?**

Because we need to “go slow to go fast” and slow down the learning process to really ascertain the quality/depth of learning taking place, Primary and Junior teachers might instead consider using and sharing unit learning goals if lesson learning goals might seem to overwhelm their students. These unit learning goals act as touchstones throughout the learning process and can be used for student self-assessment. Again, in constructivist, inquiry or problem-based learning approaches, learning goals can be shared as part of consolidation and debrief with students, support ongoing reflection and goal setting and help identify next steps for learning. Teachers will use their informed professional judgement in framing unit or lesson learning goals in determining what will best improve student learning.

**What About Learning Goals and Curriculum Mapping?**

A school’s decision to add learning goals to its curriculum map is directly informed by its collective understanding of the *Growing Success* assessment *for* learning framework and its role in supporting all students. A starting point would be to begin with the work being done within the collaborative inquiry (TLCP and PLC) process. Even so, it would still be important for teachers to achieve a certain level of confidence and proficiency with learning goals including time to use learning goals in the classroom with students before attempting to revise a school-wide curriculum map.

For curriculum maps to be meaningful, authentic and well-used, teachers likely need to create a shared understanding of grade level or subject-specific learning goals through purposeful collaboration and ownership of the curriculum mapping process. The point of using learning goals and success criteria in every classroom is to improve student learning – adding learning goals to a school’s curriculum map adds another level of precision; however, teacher readiness is key to success.

**Crafting curriculum learning goals involves teachers being able to answer the following questions for each sequence of learning (grades, units, courses)?**

* What Do Students Need to **Know** and **Understand**? (‘**Understand**’ can be clarified with action verbs)
* What Should Students **Be Able to Say/Articulate, Do, Perform or Represent**?
* How Will Students **Think** Critically and/or Creatively?
* How Will Students **Apply and Transfer New Knowledge/Skills to Familiar/Unfamiliar Contexts**?
* How Will Students **Communicate** Their Learning to Others?
* Which Learning Skills and Work Habits **Best Support** the Established Learning Goals?
* Which Forms Will the **Evidence of Learning** Take (observations, conversations, student products)?



**How Does Crafting Curriculum Learning Goals Involve Reflection and Planning?**

**What Might Be Some Sample Criteria for Developing and Refining Learning Goals?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria (the learning goal...) | * Met | Not Yet Met |
| * Identifies what is to be learned |  |  |
| * Links to the Overall and Specific curriculum expectations to be addressed |  |  |
| * Connects to a big idea or enduring understanding |  |  |
| * Identifies incremental steps to build student knowledge and skills (scaffolding) |  |  |
| * Uses clear, concise language |  |  |
| * Uses language that is student-friendly and grade-appropriate |  |  |
| * Uses verbs that describe specific and observable actions |  |  |
| * Is articulated/framed from a student learning perspective, “I can...” or “We are learning to...” |  |  |
| * Is both visible and accessible for students in the classroom in order to support their learning |  |  |
| * Is accompanied by corresponding success criteria |  |  |
| * Can be assessed by teachers (for, of, as learning) |  |  |
| * Can be connected back to one or more of the four achievement chart categories |  |  |

**What Do Some Researchers Say About the Value of Learning Goals?**

* *Learning is easier when learners understand what goal they are trying to achieve, the purpose of achieving the goal, and the specific attributes of success. (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002)*

* *When we invest time up front to build the vision [of what students are to be learning], we gain it back later in increased student motivation and the resulting higher‐quality work. (Chappuis, 2009)*

* *Teachers should continually help students clarify the intended learning as the lessons unfold – not just at the beginning of a unit of study. (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002)*

* *Setting clear targets for student learning involves more than posting an instructional goal for students to see. It also requires elaboration of the criteria by which student work will be judged.*  *(Shepard et al, 2005)*

* *Students can only achieve learning goals if they understand those goals, assume some ownership of them, and can assess progress. (Nicol & Macfarlane‐Dick, 2006)*
* *Learning is more likely to be fostered when feedback focuses on features of the task (success criteria) and emphasizes learning goals. (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996)*

**Examples of Learning Goals:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Overall Expectations** | **Related Specific Expectations** | **Learning Goals** |
| 1. **Listening to Understand**: listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes | 1.2. identify and use several different active listening strategies when participating in a variety of classroom interactions. | I can name several active listening strategies that can help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I can use several active listening strategies to help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| 1.3. identify and use several different listening comprehension strategies before, during, and after listening to understand both simple and complex oral texts | I can name several active listening strategies that can help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I can use several active listening strategies to help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| 2. **Speaking to Communicate**: use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes | 2.1. communicate orally for several different purposes, using language suitable for the intended audience I use appropriate language in a large-group conversation. | I use appropriate language in a large-group conversation. |
| 2.2. demonstrate an understanding of several different interpersonal speaking strategies and adapt them to suit the purpose, situation, and audience, exhibiting sensitivity to cultural differences. | I can name several speaking strategies that can help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I can use several interpersonal speaking strategies to help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| 2.3. communicate in a clear, coherent manner appropriate to the purpose, subject matter, and intended audience I can speak clearly, coherently, and appropriately in a large-group conversation. | I speak in different ways to engage others and communicate meaning in a large-group conversation. |
| I can speak clearly, coherently, and appropriately in a large-group conversation. |
| 2.4. use appropriate words, phrases, and terminology, and several different stylistic devices, to communicate their meaning and engage their intended audience I can use appropriate words and phrases in a large-group meeting to express my ideas and opinions. | I can use appropriate words and phrases in a large-group meeting to express my ideas and opinions. |
| I speak in different ways to engage others and communicate meaning in a large-group conversation. |
| 2.5. identify several different vocal strategies and use them selectively and with sensitivity to audience needs | I can name several different vocal strategies that can help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I can use several different vocal strategies to help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I show I am sensitive to my peers by using appropriate vocal strategies in large-group conversations. |
| 2.6. identify several different non-verbal cues and use them, with sensitivity to audience needs, to help convey their meaning | I can name several different non-verbal cues that can help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I can use several different non-verbal cues to help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I show I am sensitive to my peers by using appropriate non-verbal cues in large group conversations. |
| 3. **Reflecting on Skills and Strategies**: reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations | 3.1. describe several different strategies they used before, during, and after listening and speaking; explain which ones they found most helpful; and identify steps they can take to improve their oral communication skills | I can describe the strategies I use before, during, and after listening to help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I can describe the strategies I use before, during, and after speaking to help communication in a large-group conversation. |
| I can explain the listening strategies I found most helpful in communicating in a large-group conversation. |
| I can explain the speaking skills I found most helpful in communicating in a large-group conversation. |
| I can Identify my listening and speaking skill strengths in communicating in a large-group conversation. |
| I can identify ways to improve my listening and speaking skills in a large-group conversation. |

**Success Criteria**

Standards or specific descriptions of successful attainment of learning goals developed by teachers on the basis of criteria in the achievement chart, and discussed and agreed upon in collaboration with students, that are used to determine to what degree a learning goal has been achieved. Criteria describe what success “looks like”, and allow the teacher and student to gather information about the quality of student learning.

**Criteria for all Learning Goals:**

1. **Are Clearly Stated** (written in clear language, made public, offered in student-friendly versions, and are supported by a variety of samples of student work at different levels of performance)
2. **Centre on Important Learning**(s) (evidence of learning reflects the findings from current professional research)
3. **Are Articulated Within and Across Grades** (fits into a K-12 curriculum model of progression and context)
4. **Are Manageable in Number and Scope** (too many goals overwhelm, too few frustrate)
5. **Fall Within the Teacher’s Repertoire** (you must become a confident, competent master of the targets that you expect your students to hit, and familiar with the concepts and big ideas in the discipline)

-Adapted from Rick Stiggins

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| --- | --- |
| **Elementary**   1. I can tell about the people and places in my community. (Gr. 1 Social Studies) 2. We are studying Living Skills. (Gr. 2 Health and Physical Education) 3. We understand the importance of problem solving. (Gr. 3 Mathematics) 4. I can name and describe different elements used to create music. (Gr. 4 The Arts) 5. We are learning to identify the point of view presented in a text. (Gr. 5 Language) 6. We are learning to apply a variety of tactical solutions to increase your chances of success as you participate in physical activities. (Gr. 6 Health and Physical Education) 7. Students will be able to design and safely build parallel circuits and series circuits. (Gr. 6 Science and Technology) 8. I am learning to analyse the issues related to substance use. (Gr. 7 Health and Physical Education) 9. We are learning about the relationship of the angles in a triangle. (Gr. 8 Mathematics) 10. We are learning to use a variety of methods to construct bisectors of line segments and angles. (Gr. 8 Mathematics) | **Secondary**   1. We are studying the creative process. (Gr. 9 The Arts) 2. We are learning to use cues to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. (Gr. 9 Core French) 3. I can make and explain inferences about texts. (Gr. 9 English) 4. We are learning to explain how colour is produced and used using the additive and subtractive theories of colour mixing.   (Gr. 10 Science)   1. We are learning to use appropriate and inclusive content, images, and language in communications media productions. (Gr. 10 Technological Education) 2. I can use a variety of techniques to convey a sense of movement. (Gr. 11 The Arts) 3. We are learning to understand recursive sequences. (Gr. 11 Mathematics) 4. I can explore a wide range of increasingly complex traditional and emerging technologies, tools, and techniques. (Gr. 12 Computer Studies) 5. I am learning to understand accounting principles and practices. (Gr. 12 Business Studies) |

**What Are Some Examples of Curriculum Learning Goals for Both Elementary and Secondary Panels?**

**Planning a Unit with Curriculum Learning Goals**

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| --- | --- |
| **Unit:** | |
| **Overall Curriculum Expectations:** | **Big Ideas & Enduring Understandings:** |
| **Clusters of Related Specific Expectations:** | |
| **Unit Tasks: Assessments *For* Learning: Assessments *Of* Learning:** | |
| **Learning Goals:**  **Knowledge/ Thinking Application Communication Understanding** | |
| **Evidence of Learning (*observations, conversations, student products*):** | **Learning Skills:** |

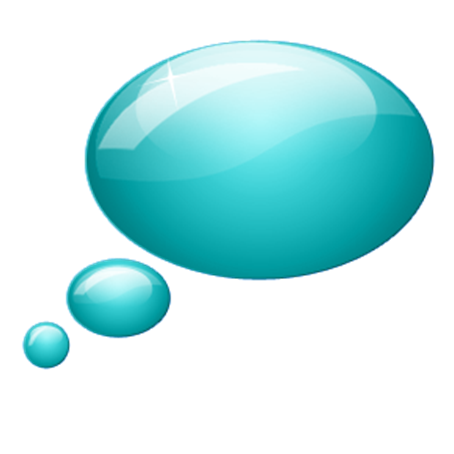
**Curriculum Expectations.**

The knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop and to demonstrate in their class work, on tests, **and in various other activities** on which their achievement is assessed and evaluated. *Overall expectations* describe in general terms the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of each grade/course. *Specific expectations* describe the expected knowledge and skills in greater detail.

**Big Ideas/**

**Enduring Understandings**

Big ideas are the broad, important understandings that students should retain long after they have forgotten many of the details of something they have studied. Enduring understandings are the important knowledge and skills that have lasting value beyond the classroom and are transferable beyond the scope of a particular unit. Enduring understandings relate directly to the synthesis of curriculum expectations (overall and/or specific) within a course. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) suggest that an “enduring understanding” is more than simply “material worth covering." Enduring understandings are the ideas and concepts that reside at the heart of the discipline and have ongoing value beyond the classroom.



**Questions for Further Consideration:**

1. How does identifying, sharing, and clarifying learning goals and success criteria lead to a common understanding of what is being learned?
2. How are learning goals and success criteria foundational to improved learning for students?
3. How might teachers use learning goals and the process of clarifying learning goals and success criteria to improve the overall quality of a collaborative inquiry (TLCP or PLC)?
4. How might teacher collaboration around developing and refining curriculum learning goals strengthen individual and collective professional judgement?
5. How might teachers and administrators model use of learning goals and success criteria in all adult professional learning situations?
6. How might technology be used to support the school community in moving from a grading culture to a learning culture?
7. How might we support parents by communicating curriculum learning goals and success criteria in a variety of ways that would make learning from K-12 more transparent?

**Additional Resources:**

* *Growing Success 2010* (Ontario Ministry of Education)
* *AER Gains – Edugains:* [*www.edugains.ca*](http://www.edugains.ca)
* *Making Classroom Assessment Work, 2nd Edition, Anne Davies , 2007*
* *Understanding by Design, 2nd Edition, Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, 2005*
* *Understanding by Design: Professional Development Workbook, Jay McTighe, Grant Wiggins, 2005*
* Classroom Assessment for Student Learning Doing It Right – Using It Well, Rick Stiggins, Judith Arter, Jan Chappuis, Steve Chappuis, 2006
* Student-Involved Assessment for Learning, Fourth Edition, Richard J. Stiggins, 2005.